



HACKERAY'S



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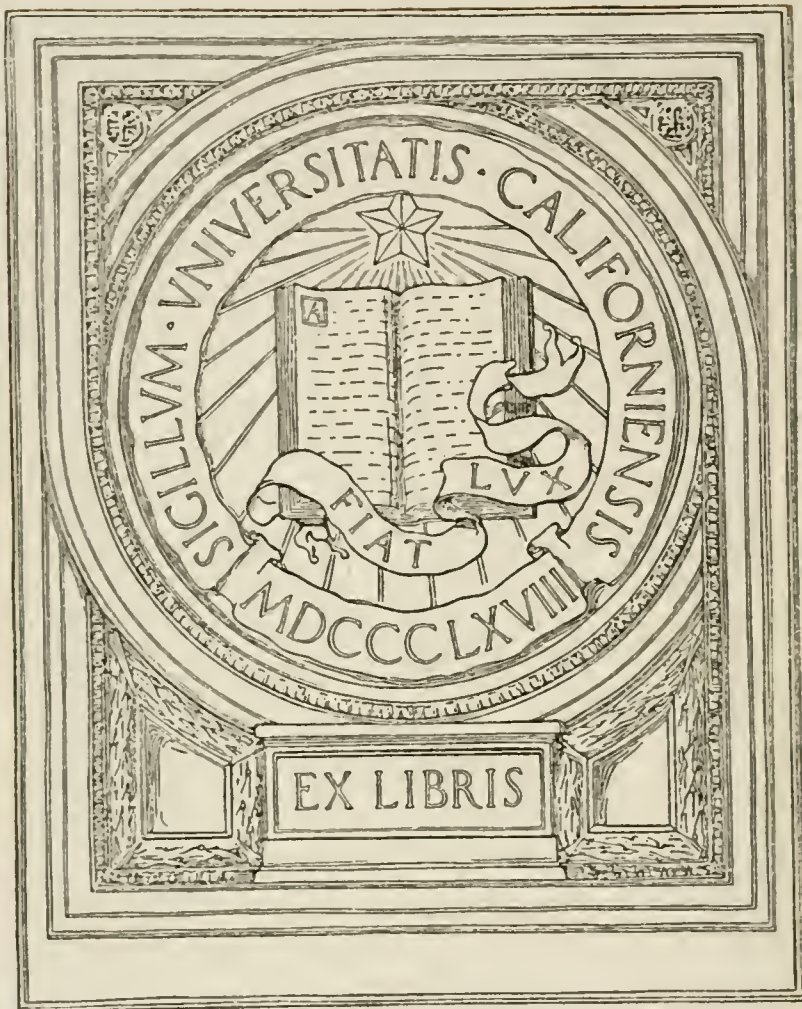
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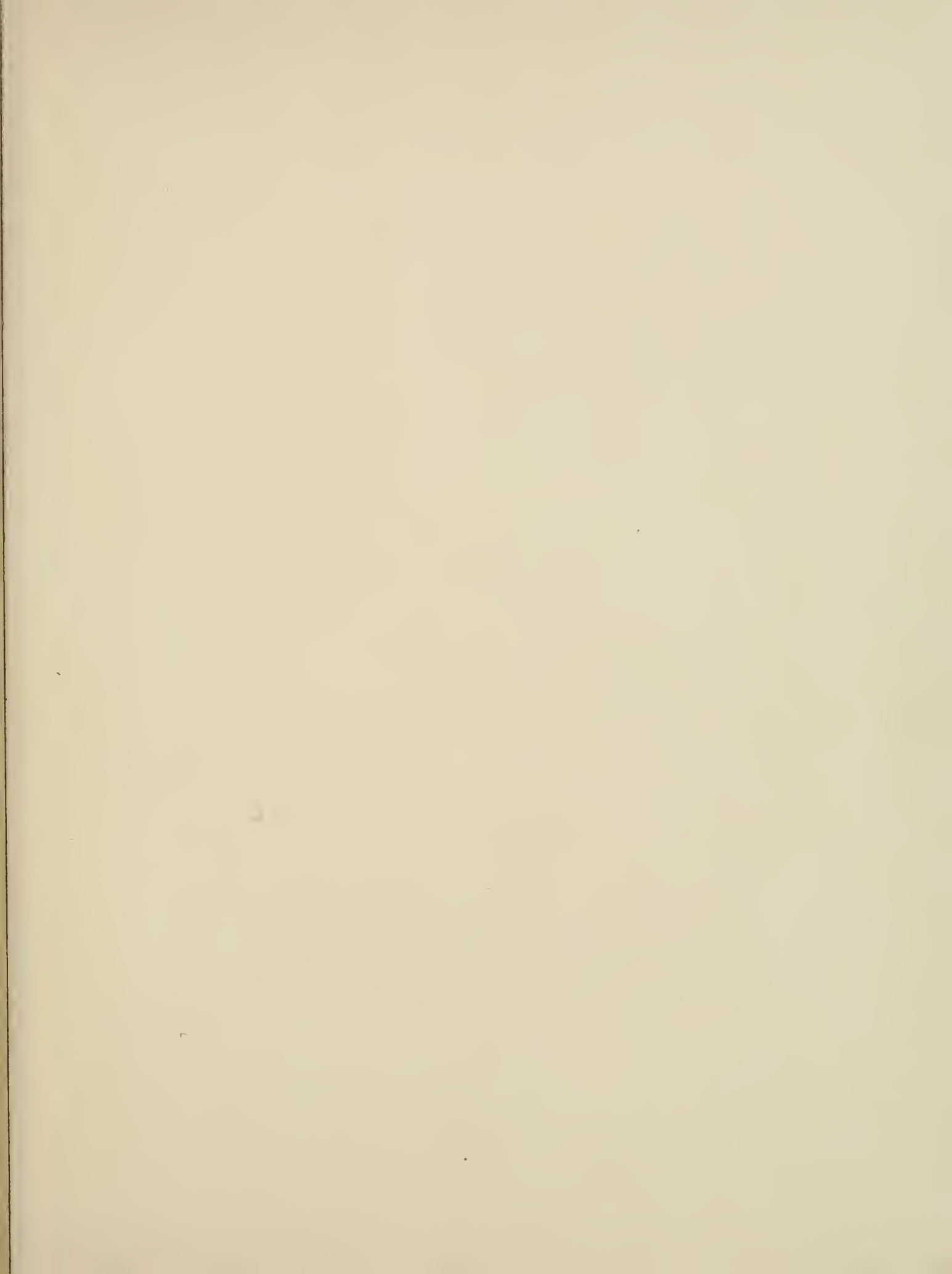
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William W. Ridding.





THACKERAY'S LONDON.

By the same Author.

A LITTLE UPSTART.

A NOVEL.

BY

WILLIAM H. RIDEING.

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William Makepeace Thackeray.

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WILLIAM H. RIDEING

11

Thackeray's London
HIS HAUNTS AND THE SCENES
OF HIS NOVELS



ILLUSTRATED



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THACKERAY'S LONDON.



THACKERAY does not give the same opportunities for the identification of his scenes as Dickens. The elaboration with which the latter localizes his characters, and the descriptive minutiae with which he makes their haunts no less memorable than themselves, are not to be found in the works of the author of *Vanity Fair*. No faculty was stronger in Dickens, or of more service to him, than his power of word-painting. He reproduces the objects

by which the persons he describes are surrounded with a fidelity which would be tedious, if it were not relieved by the humor which humanizes bricks, and imparts a grotesque sort of sensibility to articles of furniture; and it is not easy to think of any of his leading characters without being reminded of the neighborhoods in which they played their parts.

Thackeray, on the contrary, is not topographical. The briefest mention of a street suffices with him, and it is the character, not the locality, which has permanence in the reader's mind. Every feature of Becky Sharp is remembered with a vividness which disassociates her with fiction; but the situation of the little house in which the unfortunate Rawdon finally discovers her duplicity, in the famous scene with the Marquis of Steyne, escapes the memory. When the book is no longer fresh to him,

the reader may recollect that after her marriage she went to live in Mayfair, and may picture to himself a small, fashionable dwelling in that aristocratic neighbourhood; but he cannot remember that the author places it in Curzon street, nor that the Sedleys lived in Russell Square, Philip in Old Parr street, and Colonel Newcome in Fitzroy Square.

We have one example in Thackeray of the grotesquely humorous descriptive power of which Dickens was a master. It hits at the absurd nomenclature of modern London suburbs, where every box of a house has some high-sounding name of the sort which ornaments the fiction of the "Chambermaid's Companion," and it describes the neighbourhood into which the Sedleys moved after their failure—"St. Adelaide Villa, Anna Maria Road, West, where the houses look like baby houses; where the

people looking out of the first floor windows must infallibly, as you think, sit with their feet in the parlors below; where the shrubs in the little gardens in front bloom with a perennial display of little children's pinafores, little red socks, caps, etc. (*polyandria polygenia*); whence you hear the sound of jingling spinets and women singing; and whither, of an evening, you see city clerks plodding wearily."

The fanciful supposition that persons in the upper stories must have their legs on the lower floor is richly characteristic of the manner in which Dickens would have indicated the smallness of the houses. It is a touch of that kind of humour which distinguishes all the work of that author, and which was one of his most serviceable resources; it gives facial expression to inanimate objects, and, as we have said, it individualizes the haunts of his characters

no less than the characters themselves, But it is so rare in Thackeray that the exhibition of it in this fragment strikes us, as the lurid style of the earlier writings of Lord Lytton would do if we were to find a passage from them interpolated among the confiding garrulities of *Vanity Fair*.

It was not that Thackeray lacked the power of observation in the direction of externals,—though he certainly did not possess it in the same degree as Dickens—nor that his characters were airy visions to him, requiring no other habitation than the chambers of his brain; they were indeed flesh and blood to him, and Miss Thackeray has told a friend of the writer's,* how, in her walks with her father, he would point out the very houses in which they lived. The difference was principally one

* Mr. R. R. Bowker.

of method. Thackeray's was the classic stage—a dais with a drapery of green baize, before the time of scenery. Dickens's was the modern stage, with lime-lights, trap-doors, and elaborate “sets.”



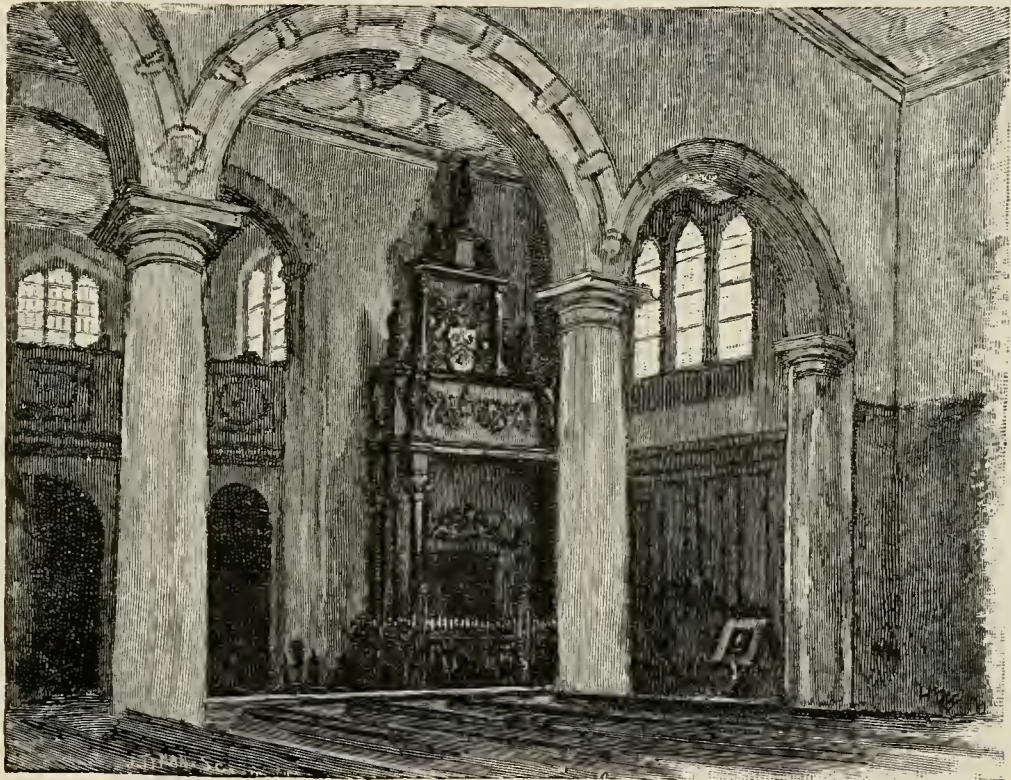


II.

THOUGH his other scenes are misty, no reader of Thackeray who engages in a search for the places which he describes is likely, however, to overlook the Charterhouse, the ancient foundation to which he refers again and again, dwelling on it with many fond reminiscences. It is the school in which he himself was educated, and he has associated three generations of his characters with it. Thomas Newcome received instruction here, also his son Clive, with Pendennis, Osborne, and Philip of the second generation, after whom came Rawdon Crawley's little son and young George

Osborne ; and, finally, the dear old Colonel, when broken down and weary, joined the poor brethren who are pensioners of the institution, and within its monastic walls cried *Adsum* as he heard a voice summoning him to the everlasting peace. Occasionally it is called Slaughter-house, once or twice "Smiffle" (after the boys' way of pronouncing Smithfield, where it is situated) ; but in Thackeray's later works he generally speaks of it as Grayfriars or Whitefriars.

"It had been," he says in *Vanity Fair*, "a Cistercian convent in old days when the Smith field, which is contiguous to it, was a tournament ground. Obstinate heretics used to be brought thither, convenient for burning hard by. Henry the Eighth seized upon the monastery and its possessions, and hanged and tortured some of the monks who would not



OLD CHAPEL, WITH THE FOUNDER'S TOMB—CHARTER-HOUSE.

accommodate themselves to the pace of his reform. Finally, a great merchant bought the house and land adjoining, in which, with the help of other wealthy endowments of land and money, he established a famous foundation hospital for old men and children. An extra school grew round the old, almost monastic foundation, which subsists still with its middle-age costume and usages ; and all Christians pray that it may flourish.

“ Of this famous house some of the greatest noblemen, prelates and dignitaries in England, are governors ; and as the boys are very comfortably lodged, fed and educated, and subsequently inducted to good scholarships at the University, and livings in the Church, many little gentlemen are devoted to the ecclesiastical profession from their tenderest years, and there is considerable emulation to procure nomina-

tions for the foundation. It was originally intended for the sons of poor and deserving clerics and laics ; but many of the noble governors of the institution, with an enlarged and rather capricious benevolence, selected all sorts of objects for their bounty. To get an education for nothing, and a livelihood and profession assured, was so excellent a scheme, that some of the richest people did not disdain it ; and not only the great men's relations, but great men themselves, sent their sons to profit by the chance. Right reverend prelates sent their own kinsmen as the sons of their clergy, while on the other hand some great noblemen did not disdain to patronize the children of their confidential servants, so that a lad entering this establishment had every variety of youthful society wherewith to mingle."

As a rule, however, the boys belong

to the upper classes, and an education obtained at Charterhouse is scarcely less of a social distinction than the much coveted and costly preparation of Eton, Harrow, or Winchester. The history of the school is full of brilliant names, and among its scholars have been Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Isaac Barrow, General Havelock, Sir William Blackstone, Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, Lord Liverpool, John Wesley and George Grote.

It is possible that one may know London intimately, and yet be ignorant of the situation of the Charterhouse. Smithfield is out of the way of the main lines of traffic: it is a squalid neighbourhood, north of Ludgate Hill, and it retains its ancient characteristics more than almost all other parts of the great city,—which has been so modernized that Cheapside looks like a slice of Broadway, and once shabby Fleet

Street is showing all sorts of ornamental fronts. It has in it many solemn brick houses of a blackish purple, with glowing roofs of red tiles; smaller buildings of an earlier period, with high peaked gables and overlapping second stories; sequestered alleys, and courts bearing queer names, and many curious little shops.

One of the most direct approaches to it is through the Old Bailey from Ludgate Hill. On this route we pass the austere granite of Newgate Prison and also Pye Corner, where as the sign-board of a public house tells us, the great fire of 1666 ended, after burning from the 2nd to the 10th of September; we also pass Cock Lane, famous for its ghost, and the quaintest of old London churches, St. Bartholomew the Great, which is hemmed in and partly extinguished by the surrounding houses, that hide all but its smoked and

patched tower, and a few square feet of grass, which is justifiably discouraged in its want of sunshine and space ; thence our path is by the extensive buildings of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, about which there is a morbid activity in the flow of officials and visitors, most of the latter being slatternly and anxious-looking women, with babies and baskets on their arms, and from the Hospital we cross the street, and so through the new cattle market, which fills the space once occupied by the pens, and covers the spot whence the souls of many martyrs have passed in flame from the stake to heaven.





III.

THE buildings form an irregular cluster spread over a prodigal area, and isolated by a wall of brick and stone which many London fogs and long days of yellow weather have reduced to the dismalest of colors. None of them are lofty ; some of them are of granite, and others of brick, upon which age has cast a smoky mantle. They are separated by wide courts and winding passages ; and when I was there in the Easter vacation these open spaces were vacant, and the brisk twittering of the sparrows was the only sound that came from them. The quiet seemed all the greater, inasmuch as all

around the walls is a busy neighbourhood, full of traffic and voices. The courts are for the most part paved with small cobblestones, and are cleanly swept; but some of them are grassy—grassy in the dingy and feeble way of London vegetation. These buildings look as sad as they are old; to the juvenile imagination the high walls and the severe architecture must be sharply distressing, and many a boy has felt his heart sink with misgiving as, for the first time, he has been driven through the old gate-way, to be placed as a scholar on Thomas Sutton's* famous foundation.

* The school was founded by Thomas Sutton, a rich merchant, in 1611. The buildings which are mostly of the 16th Century, had been used until the Reformation, as a monastery of Carthusian monks. "Charterhouse" is a corruption of Charreuse, and the scholars still call themselves Carthusians.

At this old gate-way, one day, I saw a very feeble old gentleman, strangely dressed in a scarlet waistcoat and bright blue trousers, a brass-buttoned coat, and a high silk hat. He was very small and very weak, moving slowly with the help of a stick, and coughing painfully behind his pocket handkerchief. To my question as to the admission of strangers, he said, quaveringly : "If you are a patron, you may see the buildings, but you had better ask the janitor ; there he is. I," he added, with some hesitation, "I am one of the poor brethren."

The old head bowed down with years and sorrow, the white hair, the troublesome cough, the courteous amiability of manner, reminded me of Colonel Newcome—Codd Newcome, as the boys began to call him ; and, indeed, this old gentleman had been a captain in the Queen's service, as the

janitor afterward told us, though he was not as stately nor as handsome as the dear old Colonel was. None of the celebrities of Charterhouse possesses the same vivid interest, the same hold upon our sympathies, the same command of the affections, as the brave, high-minded, large-hearted old soldier, who sacrificed all he had in the world to keep his honour spotless, and to shield others from misery.

As the janitor took us from hall to hall in the dark, monastic buildings, Colonel Newcome was constantly before us, and his figure, even more than that of Thackeray himself, filled our minds, and made us feel kindly to the old pensioners who were sunning themselves at the doors of their rooms, or were gathered in a quiet corner of one of the courts, chatting or reading.

The pensioners, of whom there are eighty,

remain in the old buildings, in which each of them has a sitting-room and a bed-room, with a servant to wait upon him. Their table is a common one, in a grand old dining-hall, and twice a day they don their gowns to go to service in the little chapel, to thank God for his manifold blessings and mercies. But the boys have been removed since 1870 to a magnificent new school at Godalming, Surrey, thirty-four miles away from London fogs and the crowds of Smithfield, and they have taken nearly all the relics of Thackeray with them, including the little bed in which he slept while a scholar. Their part of the buildings is now occupied by the Merchant Taylors' School, which has added a large new schoolroom to the square. The ground is immensely valuable, and from an economic point of view it seems a waste to devote it to the obsolete buildings which

fill the greater part of it. Soon, no doubt, another home will be found for the poor brethren, and when commerce takes possession of Charterhouse Square, one of the most interesting piles in London town will disappear.*

The cleanliness and orderliness which leave no scrap of waste or wisp of straw or ridge of dust visible in the approach have also swept up every part of the interior; and though the smoke and dust have taken a tenacious hold, the charwoman's

* Several relics of Thackeray are preserved in the new school at Godalming, including some pen and ink sketches made by him, and five volumes containing all the existing MS. of *The Newcomes*. The MS. is written partly in his own hand, partly in the hand of Miss Anne Thackeray (now Mrs. Ritchie), and partly in another hand. Several stones on which some of the old scholars, including Thackeray, carved their names, have also been removed from the old school in London to the new one.

besom and scrubbing-brush have been vigorously applied. The buildings look quite as old as they are. The oaken wainscoting is the deepest brown; the balusters and groining are massive and carved; the tapestries are indistinct and phantasmal, like faded pictures, and the walls are like those of a fortress. It is easy in these surroundings to conjure up visions of the middle ages.

The site of the dormitories of the Charterhouse boys is now occupied by the new school-room of the Merchant Taylors; but looking upon it is a dusky cloister, once given to the prayerful meditations of the friars, which in Thackeray's time and later was used for games of ball; the gloom is everywhere. The ghosts of the silent brothers seem fitter tenants than the boys with shining faces and ringing voices. There are narrow, suspicious-look-

ing passages, and heavily-barred, irresistible oaken doors. But these corridors and barriers against the unwelcome lead into several apartments of truly magnificent size and faded splendour. The dining-hall of the poor brethren has wainscoting from twelve to twenty feet high, a massively groined roof, a musicians' gallery with a carved balustrade, and a large fire-place framed in ornamental oak, over which the Sutton arms are emblazoned; while at the end of the room is a portrait of the founder, dressed in a flowing gown and the suffocatingly frilled collar of his time. Parallel to this, and accessible by a low door, is the dining-hall of the gown boys, a long, narrow room, with a very low ceiling, high wainscoting, a knotty floor, insufficient windows, and another large fire-place inclosed by an elaborate mantel-piece of oak. Here almost side by side, these boys with life

untried before them and the old men well-nigh at their journey's end, ate the bread provided for them by their common benefactor, and joined voices in thanksgiving; here still the old pensioners assemble, and in trembling voices murmur grace over the provision made for them. Upstairs there is a banqueting-hall, which is not inferior in sombre grandeur to that of the poor brothers, and was once honoured by the presence of Queen Elizabeth. It also is wainscoted and groined, and hung with tapestries, out of which the pictures have nearly vanished. The fire-place is the finest of all, and above it some hazy paintings are lost in the shadow.

Thackeray was one of the foundation scholars, and lived in the school, and wore a gown. He was, from all accounts, an average boy, undistinguished by industry or precocious ability. He was very much

like many of Dr. Birch's little friends : a simple honest, and sometimes mischievous lad. Though he was never elected orator or poet, he wrote parodies, and was clever with a pencil, which he used with no little fancy and humour. The margins of books and scraps of paper of all kinds were covered with sketches, most of them caricatures ; and it is said to have been a familiar thing to see the artist surrounded by an admiring crowd of his school-fellows, while he developed, with grotesque extravagance and never-failing effect, the outlines of some juvenile hero or some notability of history. The head master of the school was severe, and as Thackeray was very sensitive, it is supposed that his school days were not of the happiest. But he bore the old foundation no ill-will ; who, indeed, shall ever do it more honor than he has done ?

Only a few weeks before his death, Thackeray was present on Founder's Day. He sat in his usual back seat in the old chapel. He went thence to hear the oration in the governor's room, and, as he walked up to the orator with his contribution, was received with hearty applause. At the banquet afterward, he sat at the side of his old friend and school-mate John Leech; and Thackeray it was who, on that occasion proposed the toast of "The Charterhouse."

Taking us through the grounds by the way of Wash-house Court, a quadrangle of very old and smoky buildings, which were attached to the original monastery, the janitor conducted us into the cool and quiet cloister which leads into the chapel. Here is the handsome memorial of the Carthusians slain in the wars, and on the walls is a commemorative tablet to Thackeray.

Next to Thackeray's is a similar tablet to the memory of Leech.

The little chapel is much as it was in their time and long before. The founders' tomb, with its grotesque carvings, monsters, heraldries, still darkles and shines with the most wonderful shadows and lights, as Thackeray described it. There, in marble effigy, lies Fundator Noster in his ruff and gown, awaiting the great examination day. Just in front of this elaborate monument, Thackeray himself used to sit when a boy. The children are present no more ; but yonder, twice a day, sit the pensioners of the hospital, listening to the prayers and the psalms,—four-score of the old reverend black gowns. The custom of the school was that, on the twelfth of December, the head gown boy should recite a Latin oration ; and, though the scholars are removed to Godalming, the ceremony is

perpetuated. Many old Carthusians attend this oration ; after which they go to chapel and hear a sermon, which is followed by a dinner, at which old condisciples meet, old toasts are given, and speeches are made. The reader has surely not forgotten how Pendennis, himself a Grayfriars boy, came to the festival one day quite unaware of his friend's presence.

“ The pensioners were in their benches, the boys in their places, with young fresh faces and shining white collars. We oldsters, be we ever so old,” Pendennis has written, “ become boys again as we look at that old familiar tomb, and think how the seats are altered since we were here, and how our doctor—not the present doctor, the doctor of *our* time—used to sit yonder, and his awful eye used to frighten us shuddering boys on whom it lighted ; and how the boy next us *would* kick our

shins during service time, and how the monitor would cane us afterwards, because our shins were kicked. Yonder sit forty cherry-cheeked boys, thinking about home and holidays to-morrow. Yonder sit the pensioners coughing feebly in the twilight. Is Codd Ajax alive you wonder?—the Cistercian lads called these old gentlemen Cods, I know not wherefore—but is old Codd Ajax alive I wonder? or Codd soldier? or kind old Codd gentleman? or has the grave closed over them?

“A plenty of candles light up this chapel, and this scene of age and youth, and early memories, and pompous death. How solemn the well-remembered prayers are, here uttered again in the place where in childhood we used to listen to them. How beautiful and decorous the rite, how noble the ancient words of the supplications which the priest utters. and to which gene-

rations of fresh children, and troops of by-gone seniors have cried Amen! under those arches! The service for Founder's Day is a special one; one of the Psalms selected being the thirty-seventh, and we hear:— 23. 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD; and He delighteth in His way. 24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand, 25. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' As we came to this verse, I chanced to look up from my book toward the swarm of black-coated pensioners, and amongst them—amongst them—sat Thomas Newcome." The noble old man had come to end his days here, and we know of no chapter in English literature more affecting than that in which his light is put out, and he softly murmurs *Adsum.*

Tears often refuse to flow when manhood has blunted the sympathies, and we are unmoved when we read again the books which summoned copious floods in youth, but the pathos of Colonel Newcome's death, never loses its effect ; it is so deep and genuine, that the description starts our grief anew whenever we read it, and it leaves us with an acute sense of profound bereavement. We feel a tender interest in the poor brothers, and a high respect for them, because the Colonel was one of them, and because Thackeray, in his imperishable prose, has made them representative of honorable but unfortunate old age.*

* One day, while the great novel of *The Newcomes* was in course of publication, Lowell, who was then in London, met Thackeray in the street. The novelist was serious in manner, and his looks and voice told of weariness and affliction. He saw

Charterhouse is the centre of a neighbourhood which Dickens chose for many of his scenes, as the reader of this knows. "Only a wall," says Thackeray, in *Mr. and Mrs. Frank Berry*, "separates the playground, or 'green,' as it was called in his time, from Wilderness Row and Goswell street. Many a time have I seen Mr. Pickwick look out of his window in that street, though we did not

the kindly inquiry in the poet's eyes, and said, "Come into Evans's, and I'll tell you all about it. *I have killed the Colonel!*" So they walked in, and took a table in a remote corner, and then Thackeray, drawing the fresh sheets of MS. from his breast pocket, read through that exquisitely touching chapter, which records the death of Colonel Newcome. When he came to the final *Adsum*, the tears which had been swelling his lids for some time, trickled down his face, and the last word was almost an inarticulate sob."—F. H. UNDERWOOD, in *Harper's Magazine*.

know him then." Not only of Mr. Pickwick, but of many other characters, do we find reminiscences in Smithfield. The Sarah Son's Head, as John Browdy called it, Snow Hill, Saffron Hill, Fleet Lane, and Kingsgate street are not far away. The buildings with the ancient fronts, the idlers at the corners, and the confusing little alleys, which lead where no one would expect them to lead, all belong to Dickens's London. The miserable associations of his early life, his interest in the poor, and his relish for the grotesque, drew him into the shady and disreputable quarters of the city; and the student of his works can track him with greater ease and ampler results in neighbourhoods like Smithfield than in the West End. With Thackeray, the reverse is the case; and, excepting Charter-house, the reader who desires to

identify his localities finds little to reward him in a search east of Pall Mall, or south of Oxford street.





IV.

ON the site of the Imperial Club in Cursitor street, Chancery Lane, stood a notorious "sponging house," to which Rawdon Crawley was taken when arrested for debt, immediately after leaving the brilliant entertainment given by the Marquis of Steyne, and from which he wrote an ill-spelled letter to his wife (who had appeared triumphantly in some charades at that entertainment), begging her to send some money for his release. The reader remembers how the faithless little woman answered,—assuring him of her grief and anxiety, and telling him that she had not

the money, but would get it ; though, as poor, blundering, soft-hearted Rawdon discovered afterward, she had a very large sum at the moment she wrote to him, and did not send him any of it because she wished to keep him in jail that she might intrigue with the licentious old marquis ; and the reader will remember that Rawdon was released at the instance of his cousin's wife, and went to the little house in Curzon street, where he surprised his deceitful spouse, and nearly murdered her companion, the same old Marquis of Steyne, knight of the garter, lord of the powder-box, trustee of the British Museum, etc.

When we come to the end of that passage, we put the book on our lap and lean back in the chair, and, while we are still glowing with the excitement of the scene, we are filled with admiration of the genius which produced it. How did Thackeray

achieve his effects? Becky Sharp is a unique and permanent figure in literature, a subtle embodiment of duplicity, ambition, and selfishness. She is avaricious, hypocritical, specious, and crafty. Though not malignant nor to a certainty criminal, she is a conscienceless little malefactor, whose ill deeds are only limited by the ignoble dimensions of her passions. She lies with amazing glibness, is utterly faithless to her hulking husband, and utterly indifferent to her child. Her mendacity is superlative, and double-dealing enters into all her transactions. But she is so shrewd, so vivacious, so artful, so immensely clever and good-humoured, she has so much prettiness of manner and person, that, while we despise her, and have not the least pity for her when retribution falls heavily upon her, our indignation against her is not so great as we feel that it ought to be, principally

because her sins have a certain feminine archness and irresponsibility in them, which keeps them well down to the level of comedy. When we close the book we know her through and through, and thoroughly understand all the complex workings of her strategic mind. How do we know her so well? Thackeray is not exegetical, and does not depend on elaborate analysis for his effects. The actions of the characters are themselves fully expository, and do not call for any outside comments or enlargement on the part of the author. This is the case to such an extent that, when we examine the completeness with which the characters are revealed to us, we are inclined to believe that Thackeray's art is of the very highest kind, and that, though in form it is undramatic, intrinsically it is powerfully dramatic.

But we are straying from our purpose, which is simply to look for ourselves at the places which he has described. Across the way from the bottom of Chancery Lane is the Temple, to the interest of which he has added many associations. He was fond of its dark alleys, archways, courts, and back stairs.

In 1834 he was called to the bar, and for some time he occupied chambers in the venerable buildings with the late Tom Taylor. His rooms, which were at number 10 Crown Office Row, have disappeared before "improvements" that present a modern front to the gardens and the river. Philip had chambers in the Temple, and there, also, in classic Lamb's Court, Penderennis and Warrington were located.

Warrington smoking his cutty pipe, and writing his articles—the fine-hearted fellow, the unfortunate gentleman, the unpedantic

scholar, who took Pendennis by the hand and introduced him to Grub street when that young unfortunate came to the end of his means. George Warrington teaches us a new lesson in manhood, in patience, in self-abnegation. His lot is full of sorrow, his cherished ambitions are impossible, through no fault of his own, but it is not in him to surrender to "the dull gray life and apathetic end,"—his contentment is the repose of a generous nature, his cheeriness with his pipe and his work springs out of a calmly philosophic mind, a satisfied conscience, a profound faith, and when we pass through Lamb's court, not least in our affections is the shadow of him.

"The man of letters cannot but love the place which has been inhabited by so many of his brethren, and peopled by their creations as real to us at this day, as the authors whose children they

were," and says Thackeray, "Sir Roger de Coverley walking in the Temple garden, and discoursing with Mr. Spectator about the beauties in hoops and patches who are sauntering over the grass, is just as lively a figure to me, as old Samuel Johnson rolling through the fog with the Scotch gentleman at his heels, on their way to Mr. Goldsmith's chambers in Brick court, or Harry Fielding, with inked ruffles and a wet towel round his head, dashing off articles at midnight for the *Covent Garden Journal*, while the printer's boy is asleep in the passage."

Leaving the Temple, we once more enter Smithfield, to look for the site of the old Fleet prison, the scene of many episodes in the stories of Dickens. It was in this strange place, that the brilliant, but thriftless Captain Shandon lived, "one of the wisest, wittiest, and most incorrigible of

Irishmen ;" here Pendennis found him sitting on a bed, in a torn dressing gown, with a desk on his knees : here a prisoner for debt, he indited the prospectus of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which was so called, he said, because its editor was born in Dublin, and the sub-editor (excellent Jack Finucane) at Cork ; because the proprietor lived in Paternoster Row, and the paper was published in Catherine Street, Strand. This imaginary title of Thackeray's was not the only one afterwards adopted by a real newspaper. He writes of the *Whitchall Review* as an opposing print, and that is now the name of a successful London journal.

The Fleet is a thing of the past, and the attributes of Captain Shandon have no inheritors in the press of to-day. A knight armed cap-à-pie in Cheapside, would not be a more antiquated figure, than the

boozy scholar editing a reputable journal in the cell of a prison. Journalism has taken off its soft hat and shabby clothes ; it has mended its erring and improvident ways, and put on the manners of polite society. Not in a tap-room, with jorums of hot whiskey, Welsh rabbits, and devilled chops does the modern scribe regale himself. He has a club somewhere in Adelphi, or St. James', where he presents himself in sedate evening dress, he turns pale at the very mention of supper, and, instead of singing old English songs, sadly compares notes with his fellow-dyspeptics. A vulgar public-house, or low music hall stands on the site of the Haunt and the Back Kitchen. When Warrington, Pendennis, Tom Sarjeant, Clive Newcome, and Fred. Bayham frequented the Haunt, and joined in the diversions of the literary democracy, there was a superstition among them, that

the place vanished at the approach of day-break, that when Betsy turned the gas off at the door lamp, as the company went away, the whole thing faded into mist—the door, the house, the bar, Betsy, the beer-boy, Mrs. Nokes, and all. Whether this was so or not, it has now vanished, not for a day, but for ever, like Captain Shandon, and the wild Bohemianism of his time.*

* Mr. Edmund Yates states in his interesting *Memoirs of a Man of the World*, that the Cider Cellars, next to the stage door of the Adelphi, was the prototype of the Back Kitchen, immortalized in *Pendennis*. The Cave of Harmony, frequently mentioned by Thackeray, was sketched from Evans's, in Covent Garden.





V.

IT is only a minutes' walk from the corner of Fleet Lane, to the street of booksellers, Paternoster Row, in which the rival publishers, Bungay and Bacon lived—Bacon in an ancient low-browed building, with a few of his books displayed in the windows under a bust of my Lord Verulam; and Bungay in the house opposite, which was newly painted, and elaborately decorated in the style of the seventeenth century, “so that you might have fancied stately Mr. Evelyn passing over the threshold, or curious Mr. Pepys examining the books in the windows.” *The Row*, so called—as

financiers arrogantly call Wall Street, *the Street*—is not wider than an alley way, and in this respect it is exactly as it was when Warrington introduced Pendennis to the editor of the *Parlor Table Annual*, wherein his verses were published. But though its breadth has not been increased, the old buildings on both sides of it have given place in many instances to towering new ones, five and six stories high, which shut out the light, and keep the editors, compilers, printers, engravers, and book-binders, who are the principal laborers of the Row, in an all-day gloom. Both Bungay and Bacon had their domestic establishments over their shops, and their wives, who were sisters, thus had an opportunity to insult one another by looks and mute signs from their opposite windows. Bungay and Bacon, and their belligerent spouses are now out of the trade, and the annual

Souvenirs and *Keepsakes* which made a part of their business, belong to an extinct form of literature. The Row is full of Grub Street curiosities; but Lady Fanny Fantail, Miss Bunion, and the Honorable Percy Popinjay are seen within its precincts no more, and if they still exist, they probably find a new field for their distinguished services in the society papers.

Let anyone strike out which way he will from Fleet Street, he is sure to find himself in the presence of something which reminds him of Dickens, near some object which his humor has made famous, or which answers to one of his luminous descriptions.

The slums between the Strand and Soho, and between Smithfield and Clerkenwell, were fertile to him, and not a *gamin* there knew the winding alleys, and criss-cross streets better than the gentleman

with the high complexion, the sparkling eye, the iron-gray beard, the well-cut dress, and the brisk step, who might have been seen speeding through them at all sorts of unusual hours. One day, he was heard of in Ratcliff Highway, or among the riverside shanties of Poplar, and the next, among the bird shops of Seven Dials, or in the courts of Lambeth. When we contrast the little we have found of Thackeray in the neighbourhood through which we have just been, with the variety and suggestiveness of the reminiscences of Dickens in the same region, our search seems disappointing.

As we have said Thackeray was not a novelist of low life. "Perhaps," he says in the preface to *Pendennis*: "the lovers of excitement may care to know that this book began with a very precise plan, which was entirely put aside. Ladies and Gen-

tllemen, you were to have been treated, and the writer's and publisher's pocket benefited by the recital of the most active horrors. What more exciting than a ruffian (with many admirable virtues) in St. Giles, visited constantly by a young lady from Belgravia? What more stirring than the contrasts of society? The mixture of slang and fashionable language? The escapes, the battles, the murders? The exciting plan was laid aside (with a very honorable forbearance on part of the publishers) because on attempting it, I found that I failed from want of experience of my subject; and never having been intimate with any convict in my life, and the manners of ruffians and gaol-birds being quite unfamiliar to me, the idea of entering into competition with M. Eugene Sue was abandoned."





VI.

THOUGH in the east end of the town and in the south, Thackeray has left few footsteps for us to follow, in ancient and comfortable Bloomsbury, and the region to the west of it and north of Oxford street (called De Quincey's step-mother), we find much to remind us of him. It was in Russell Square that the Sedleys lived in the time of their prosperity, and thence, on the evening after the arrival of gentle Amelia from the boarding school at Chiswick, a messenger was sent for George Osborne, whose house was No. 96. Russell Square is the largest and handsomest of the chain



RUSSELL SQUARE, WHERE THE SEDLEYS LIVED.

of squares which extend, almost without a break, from Oxford street to the New Road—Bloomsbury Square, Woburn Square, Gordon Square, Tavistock Square, and Euston Square. The neighbourhood has seen many strange shifts of fortune, and some of the finest of its mansions are debased to the uses of common boarding-houses and private hotels. There are streets and streets of houses with white cards in the windows announcing "Lodgings to let." Sombre old houses they are, built of brick, with flat, uninteresting fronts, the sooty darkness of which is sometimes relieved by a yellowish portico, freshly painted, or a plaster shell of a drab colour reaching from the basement to the second story. The cheeriness of the spreading trees in the little parks, the flowering shrubs, the shining fountains, and the grass, are only a partial alleviation. Russell Square has

deteriorated less than some of the other places in the neighbourhood, however, and the houses around it would not be beneath the inclinations of a prosperous merchant such as old Sedley was. We look in vain for 96; the numbers do not go as high as that; but we have no difficulty in singling out the respectable dwelling on the western side in which poor Amelia sighed for her selfish lover, and Becky Sharp set her cap at the corpulent Mr. Jos.

How sad the story of the Sedleys is!—the unrequited love of Amelia—the untimely death of George at Waterloo—the failure of old Sedley, and the cold-heartedness of the elder Osborne! The decayed merchant musing over all sorts of fatuous schemes by which he hopes to recover his position, and sitting in the dark corner of a coffee-house with his letters spread out before him—letters relating to a make-believe and

visionary business—which he is anxious to read to every friend, is the most touching picture, after the death of Colonel Newcome, which Thackeray has drawn.

“What guest at Dives’s table can pass the familiar house without a sigh?—the house of which the lights used to shine so cheerfully at seven o’clock—of which the hall doors opened so readily—of which the obsequious servants, as you passed up the comfortable stairs, sounded your name from landing to landing, until it reached the apartment where jolly old Dives welcomed his friends! What a number of them he had! What a noble way of entertaining them! . . . How changed is the house, though! The front is patched over with bills, setting forth the particulars of the furniture in staring capitals. They have hung a shred of carpet out of the upstairs window—a half

dozen of porters are lounging on the dirty steps—the hall swarms with dingy guests of oriental countenance, who thrust printed cards into your hands, and offer to bid. Old women and amateurs have invaded the upper apartments, pinching the bed curtains, poking the feathers, shampooing the mattresses, and clapping the wardrobe drawers to and fro. . . . O Dives, who who would have thought, as we sat round the broad table sparkling with plate and spotless linen, to have such a dish at the head of it as that roaring auctioneer?"

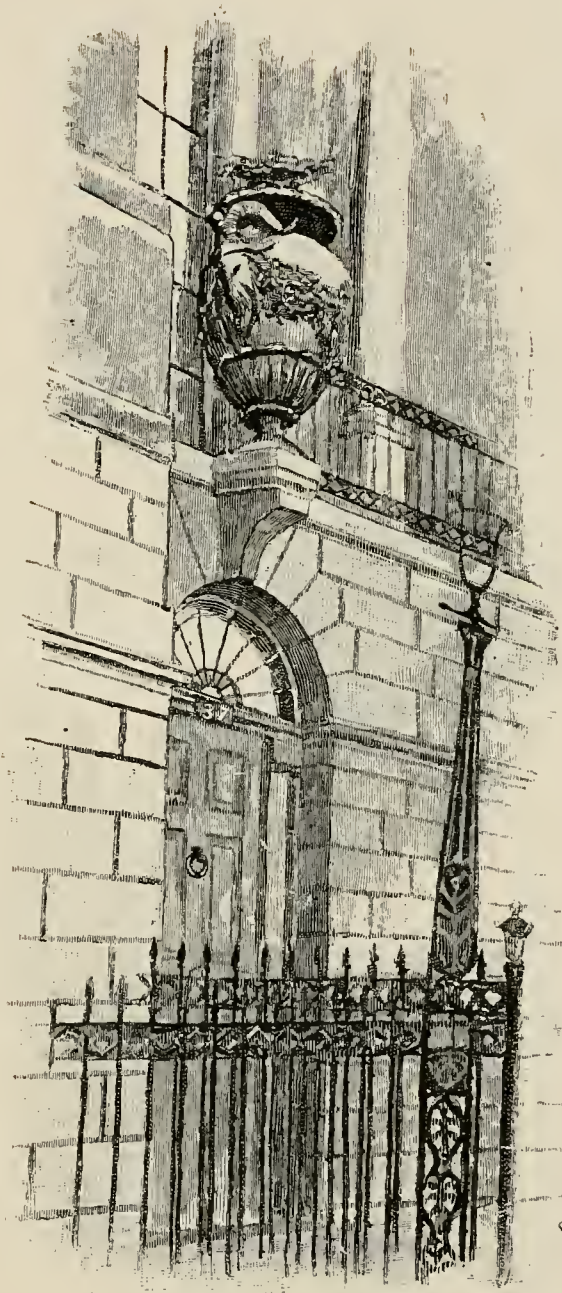
Among the bidders was a six-foot, shy-looking military gentleman, who bought a piano, and sent it without any message to the little house---St. Adelaide Villa, Anna Maria Road, West—to which the Sedleys had retired after their downfall, and there, as the reader no doubt remembers, Amelia received it with great gladness, believing

that it came from her well-beloved George. It was years before she discovered that it was not her faithless lover, but simple, brave, tender-hearted Captain Dobbin, to whom she should have been grateful.

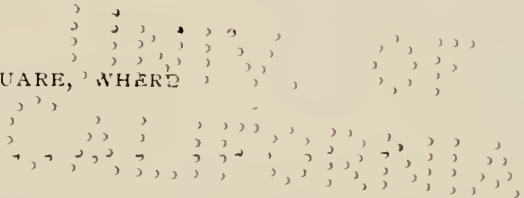
It was in Hart street, two blocks nearer Oxford street than Russell Square, that little George Osborne went to school at the house of the Rev. Laurence Veal, domestic chaplain to the Earl of Bareacres, who prepared young noblemen and gentlemen for the universities, the senate, and the learned professions, whose system did not embrace the degrading corporal severities still practiced at the ancient places of education, and in whose family the pupils found the elegancies of refined society, and the confidence and affection of a home. Thither came poor Amelia, walking all the way from Brompton to catch a glimpse of her darling boy, who had been taken away from her by his obdurate grandfather.

Great Russell street is next to Hart street, and on it fronts the classic portico of the British Museum, in the splendid reading-room of which Thackeray was often seen. It was in Great Coram street, adjoining the celebrated foundling hospital, that he lived, when, one evening, he called on a young man who had chambers in Furnival's Inn, and offered to illustrate the works which were beginning to make "Boz" famous ; and we can see him coming back to his lodgings in low spirits over the rejection of his proposal, for at that time Thackeray was poor, and neither literature nor art, which he loved the better, would support him.

About half a mile farther north, across Tottenham Court Road, is Fitzroy Square ; and when we look for 120, we find that 40 is the highest number which the Square includes. Though the little circular garden



DOOR-WAY OF 37 FITZROY SQUARE, WHERE
NEWCOME LIVED.



which it incloses is prettily laid out, and is one of the leafiest of the oases between Euston and Bloomsbury, Fitzroy has degenerated more than some of the other squares in the neighborhood. It was not very fashionable when Colonel Newcome took No. 120 with James Binnie, and it is not fashionable at all now. One side is badly out of repair. There are two or three doctors' houses in it, several houses with announcements of apartments to let, and a private hotel. The particular house occupied by the Colonel and his old Indian friend cannot be easily identified by Thackeray's description. "The house is vast, but, it must be owned, melancholy. Not long since, it was a ladies' school in an unprosperous condition. The scar left by Madame Latour's brass plate may still be seen on the tall black door, cheerfully ornamented in the style of the end of the

last century, with a funereal urn in the centre of the entry and garlands, and the skulls of rams at each corner." We fancy that it was on the south side of the square, near the middle of a row of heavy sepulchral houses built of stone, which, first blackened by the London smoke, have since been unevenly calcined by the atmosphere, so that, as in many other buildings, they look as if a quantity of dirty whitewash had been allowed to trickle down them. Some of the ornaments have been removed, but the urn is still over the door.

The days spent here were the happiest in the lives of the good old Colonel and his son. The Colonel had just returned from India full of honors and riches, and with his old chum, James Binnie, he kept house with lavish hospitality, and much originality. "The Colonel was great at

making hot-pot, curry, and pillau," Penden-
nis tells us. "What cozy pipes did we not
smoke in the dining-room, in the drawing-
room, or where we would! What pleasant
evenings did we not have with Mr. Binnie's
books and Schiedam! Then there were
solemn state dinners, at most of which the
writer of this biography had a corner." The
guests at these entertainments were not
selected for their social position or their
worldly prosperity, and it mattered not
whether they were rich or poor, well
dressed or shabby, if they were friends.
Old Indian Officers were among them,
and young artists with unkempt ways
from Newman street and Berners street;
the genial F. B. waltzed with elderly
houris and paid them compliments;
Professor Gandish talked about art with
many misplaced h's, and the Rev.
Charles Honeyman sighed and posed

and meekly received the adulation of the women.

Despite the failure of the Bundlecomb Bank, the later part of the history of the Newcomes would have been less sad but for that accident to Mr. Binnie, in which he fell from his horse and was so much injured that Mrs. Mackenzie—the “awful” campaigner—was called in to nurse him with the aid of poor little Rosey. Fitzroy Square is so old that its gloomy houses must have known much sorrow ; but we doubt if any of them has seen anything more pitiable than the humiliation of Colonel Newcome, or anything crueller than the remorseless tyranny of the “campaigner” and her fierce temper—the “campaigner,” who was all smiles, coquetry, and amiability, until prosperity fled from those who had been her benefactors, when she suddenly revealed all the

pettiness and harshness of her termagant soul.

Three streets away from the Square is Howland street, to which Clive removed with his weak little wife and his spiteful mother-in-law when disaster fell upon him; and every reader of Thackeray will remember how Pendennis, Clive, and Boy went out to meet the broken-hearted old man as he came along Guilford street and Russell Square, from the Charterhouse to eat his last Christmas dinner.

When we close the history of Colonel Newcome we ask ourselves if any man who moves our hearts as Thackeray does, could be a cynic? Cynicism is a withering of the heart, the exhaustion of a shallow moral nature, the self-consciousness of an ignoble mind. But what pathos is so spontaneous, so genuine, so lasting as Thackeray's—so free from the literary trickery which may

produce tears in youth, but only provokes a smile when age has dulled the feelings and opened the eyes to artifice. Among all English authors the writer of this little book, at least, does not recognize one who is more unaffectedly tender than this great social preacher, who speaks with unflinching candour of evil, but glorifies all good, and reads with unfeigned pity the lessons of life.





VII.

BEFORE Thackeray died, he had become as familiar a figure in the West End of London as Dr. Johnson was in Fleet street and its tributary courts and lanes. Any one who did not know him might have supposed him to be an indolent man about town; and those who could identify him generally knew where to find him, if they wished to show the great author to a friend from the country. He was usually present in the Park at the fashionable hour; and if the Pall Mall of his day is ever painted, his face and form will be as inseparable from a truthful picture as the mammoth bulk of

the testy lexicographer is from the contemporaneous prints of old Temple Bar.

Pall Mall is the street of gentlemen, as Fleet Street was the street of the ragged literary mendicants, whose wretched lot has been drawn in vivid colours by Macauley. The people one meets in it are daintily booted, gloved and hatted ; a lady is not often seen among them. It is, as Thackeray himself said, " the social exchange of London : " the main artery of Clubland, where civilized man has set up for himself all the adjuncts of luxurious celibacy, and congregates to discuss, undisturbed by the imperinencies of feminine lack-logic, the news, the politics and the scandal of the hour. It is old and historic, haunted by the shadows of many odd and famous persons, who reshape themselves unbidden in the memory of those who know its annals. The reminiscences bring out a motley

tenancy from the houses—Culloden, Cumberland and Gainsborough side by side, pretty Eleanor Gwynn and Queen Caroline, Sarah Marlborough and genial Walter Scott, George Selwyn and Dick Steele, Sheridan and William Pitt, Walpole and Joseph Addison, and Fox and the Prince Regent! The greensward at the south end of the Athenæum Club was a part of the site of Carlton House, the residence of the royal scapegrace, and we see Thackeray, as he has described himself, a frilled and petticoated urchin in his nurse's care, peeping through the colonnade at the guards, as they pace before the palace, and salute the royal chariots coming in and out. Before he reached manhood the palace had disappeared, and many of the old buildings in Pall Mall had been pulled down to make room for the magnificent club houses, which now give

the street its distinctive character. Not one of the new faces that appeared with the alterations was more familiar to the men of his time than his, and among all the princes, dandies, politicians, and scholars who filed through the street and nodded to one another from their club windows, there was not one to whom the reading part of this generation reverts with greater fondness than to Thackeray.

Those who appreciate his books—a constantly increasing number—find it difficult to understand how the author can be so misinterpreted as to be accused of any narrowness of view or harshness of judgment. To them every line is testimony of a fatherly tenderness which grieves at the necessity of its own rebuke, and though he is incapable of an apathetic acquiescence in human weakness, and does not view mankind with the lazy good nature of a

neutral temper, the pervading spirit of his criticism springs from a deep-welled charitableness.

One of the few stories told of him which would dispute his invariable kindness is of two friends who were walking in the West End when they saw Thackeray approaching them from the opposite direction. One of them had met him before, and the other had not. The former made a demonstrative salutation, which the author barely acknowledged as he loftily passed along. "You wouldn't believe that he sat up with us drinking punch and singing *Dr. Martin Luther* until three o'clock this morning," said the person, who felt aggrieved at his chilling reception, to his friend. Now supposing that the story is authentic—that two friends did meet him under those circumstances, and that one of them had been a sharer of his conviviality in the small

hours, a further claim on his recognition was not necessarily justified, and he did not violate any rule of good breeding in discouraging it. But there are some who feel emboldened by the smallest politeness of a great man to consider themselves intimate with him, and who once having seen him come down from his pedestal to smoke a cutty pipe in a miscellaneous company ever afterwards look upon him as a comrade.

The loveableness of his character is well remembered at the Athenæum Club, and the old servants, especially, speak of his kindness to them. The club house is at the corner of Waterloo Place and Pall Mall—a drab-coloured, sedate, classic building, with a wide frieze under the cornice—in a line with the Guards, the Oxford and Cambridge, the Reform, the Traveller's, and many other clubs. Opposite to it is the

United Service Club, midway is the memorial column to the Duke of York, and only a few yards away are Carlton Terrace and the steps leading into St. James's Park. Marlborough House, the home of the Prince of Wales, and unpalatial St. James's Palace, are close by.

Thackeray's name appears on the roll of the Athenæum as that of a barrister ; but he was elected in 1851 as "author of *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, and other well-known works of fiction."

He was elected under Rule II., which is worth quoting, as it is designed to preserve the character of the Club. "It being essential to the maintenance of the Athenæum, in conformity with the principles upon which it was originally founded, that the annual introduction of a certain number of persons of distinguished eminence in Science, Literature or the Arts, or

for Public Services, should be secured, a limited number of persons of such qualifications shall be elected by the Committee. The number so elected shall not exceed Nine each year . . . The Club intrust this privilege to the Committee, in the entire confidence that they will only elect persons who have attained to distinguished eminence in Science, Literature, or the Arts, or for Public Services."

He used the club both for work and pleasure, and there are two corners of the building to which his name has become attached, on account of his association with them. The dining-room is on the first floor, at the left-hand side of the spacious entrance; and he usually sat at a table in the nearest corner, where the sun shines plenteously through the high windows, and makes rainbows on the white cloth in striking the glasses. Theodore

Hook had used the same table, and uncorked his wit with his wine at it; but it was in a kindlier strain than the author of *Jack Brag* was capable of that Thackeray enlivened the friends who gathered around him.

From the Club window he probably saw many of his own characters going along Pall Mall: little Barnes Newcome; Fred Bayham, with his big whiskers; cumbrous Rawdon Crawley; the sinister Marquis of Steyne; stylish little Foker; neat Major Pendennis; homely William Dobbin, and the dashing Dr. Brand Firmin, as he drove up or down the Haymarket to or from Old Parr street. Most of them belonged to the fashionable or semi-fashionable world, and the men were sure to be members of some of the clubs in this neighbourhood. No doubt he also saw Arthur Pendennis, Clive Newcome, and Philip Firmin; but it is

likely that they appeared with the greatest distinctness when the blinds were drawn and the reflection of his own face was visible in the darkened windows.

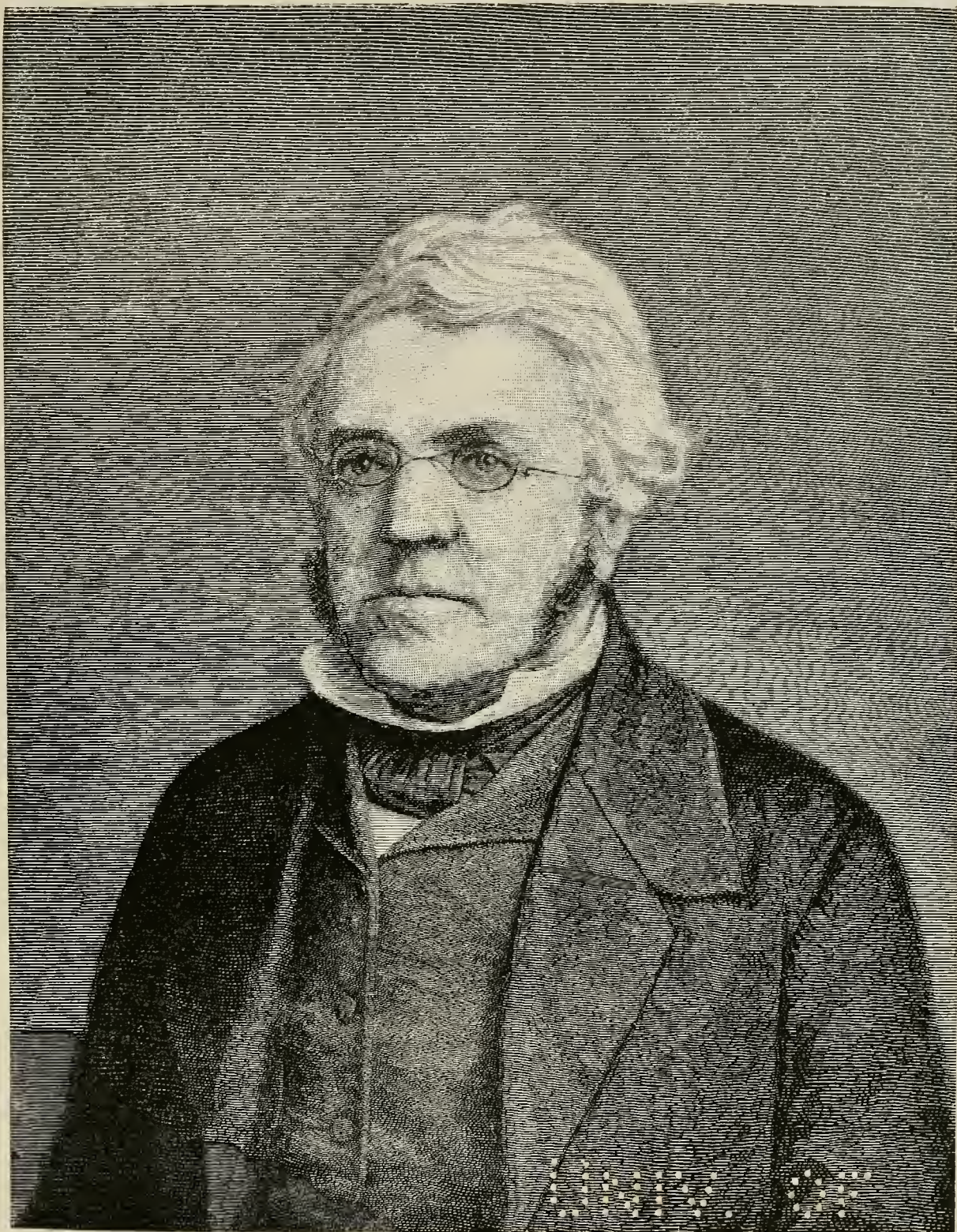
He was a *bon vivant*: fond of a nice little dinner, a connoisseur of wines, the devotee of a good cigar, a willing receiver of many little pleasures which an ascetic judgment would pronounce wasteful and slothful. He was inclined to be indolent and luxurious. Had he not lost his fortune, and been urged by necessity to write, it is to be feared that his splendid gifts would never have been exercised, and that his genius would have borne no more fruit than an unworked store of unformulated and unanalysed mental impressions, known only to himself. But his liking for choice little dinners was not wholly accountable to his relish of the food or to the satisfaction of thus gratifying the senses. No reproach of

excess or grossness of any kind attaches to his character. Though perhaps he was self-indulgent, he was not a voluptuary. His pleasure was as innocent as that of Colonel Newcome when he visited the smoky depths of Bohemia with young Clive, and the dinner was but the means of sociability and hospitality, the preparation for a more intellectual treat, a key to the fetters which keep some hearts and minds in this oddly-constituted and misgiving world from the openness and confidence of brotherhood.

It was not a cold or formal honour that was conferred upon those who sat with him. When they were taken into his confidence, no friend could be more jovial or unrestrained than he was. The simplicity of the man was one of his greatest charms. He could not endure affectations and mannerisms. He talked without effort, with-

out hesitation, and without any of the elaborateness which comes of egotistic cogitation, and the desire to present oneself in the most favourable light. He was one of the most "natural" of men, if the word is taken as meaning the absence of self-disguise ; and at these little dinners and in the smoke-room, figuratively speaking, he usually had his slippers on, and his feet stretched out on the hearth-rug.*

* "One day, many years ago, I saw him chaffing on the sidewalk in London, in front of the Athenæum Club, with a monstrous-sized, 'copiously ebriose' cabman, and I judged from the driver's ludicrously careful way of landing the coin deep down in his breeches-pocket, that Thackeray had given him a very unusual fare. 'Who is your fat friend?' I asked, crossing over to shake hands with him. 'O ! that indomitable youth is an old crony of mine,' he replied ; and then, quoting Falstaff, 'a goodly portly man, i' faith, and a corpulent, of a cheerful look, a pleasing eye, and a most noble car-



Very faithfully yours

Wm Thackeray

The modern smoking-room of the Club is under the garden, upon which the dining room of Carlton House once stood ; but in Thackeray's time a very small apartment near the top of the building, served for those addicted to the dreamy weed, and he was among them. He was not a great smoker, though he usually had a cigar at hand ; he coquetted with it, puffed at it awhile and watched the blue wreaths vanishing towards the ceiling, and then put it down, or let it go out. He did not apply himself to it with the constancy and caressing intentness of complete enjoyment, but was

riage.' It was the *manner* of saying this, then and there, in the London street, the cabman moving slowly off on his sorry vehicle, with one eye (an eye dewy with gin and water, and a tear of gratitude, perhaps) on Thackeray, and the great man himself so jovial and so full of kindness !"—*Yesterdays with Authors.* J. T. FIELDS.

fitful, as if the pleasure he derived was dubious.

Much of the pleasure of his life was dubious. We have here seen but one side of his character, the geniality which was unextinguished by an inherent sadness of temperament: the comfortableness of his hours of relaxation. But he was not a happy man, even when he had achieved success, and his powers had been fully recognized. Self-confidence is an ingredient of genius which was lacking in him. He was always in doubt about his work, he trusted his judgment when he discovered defects in it, but never felt sure of its merits. More distressing than all else was his procrastination: the heart-breaking and peace-destroying spectre of postponed work was too often before him, and he was often crippled by his hesitation and despair.

The south-west corner of the South

library, on the second floor of the Club, is filled with books of English history, and some of his work was done there. Therefrom, no doubt, some of the material of the lectures on the Georges was drawn; he could look out of the window on the very site of Carlton House, now a square of grass and flowers; and probably on these shelves he found some help in completing *Esmond* and developing *The Virginians*. He often left the library looking fatigued and troubled, and he was sometimes heard complaining of the perplexity he found in disposing of this character or that, and asserting that he knew that what he was writing would fail.

He divided his time between the Athenæum Club, the Reform, and the Garrick. Contiguous to the first two is the neighborhood of St. James's, which principally consists of clubs, bachelors' chambers, and

fashionable shops, and is associated with many of Thackeray's characters. At No. 88 St. James's street, in a building now demolished, he himself once occupied chambers, and there began and finished *Barry Lyndon*. Major Pendennis had chambers in Bury street, a narrow lane coming from Piccadilly parallel with St. James's street; and it was in them that the famous scene took place between the shrewd old soldier and Mr. Morgan, in which that rebellious flunky was brought whining to his knees by the strategic courage of his master. We have searched the neighbourhood for the "Wheel of Fortune" public-house, which Mr. Morgan frequented to discuss with other gentlemen's gentlemen, gentlemen's affairs. It is not to be found; and Bury street has scarcely a house in it that looks old enough to have been the Major's. But St. James's Church is here—a gloomy old building of

smoky brick with lighter trimmings of stone ; and the reader may remember how, one day, Esmond and Dick Steele were walking along Jermyn street after dinner at the Guards', when they espied a fair, tall man in a snuff-coloured suit, with a plain sword, very sober, and almost shabby in appearance, who was poring over a folio volume at a book-shop close by the church ; and how Dick, shining in scarlet and gold lace, rushed up to the student and took him in his arms and hugged him ; and how the object of these demonstrations proved to be Addison, who invited Steele and Esmond to his chambers in the Haymarket, where he read verses of the *Campaign* to them, and regaled them with pipes and Burgundy. I never walk through Jermyn street, or past the old church, without seeing these three figures, and they are no more

like shadows than any in the nineteenth century through which fills the street.

Willis's Rooms, formerly Almack's, are in King street, which is parallel to Jermyn street, and it was in them, that Thackeray gave his lectures.





VIII.

THACKERAY constantly mixes up real with fictitious names in his descriptions. Some disguise was often necessary, and sometimes even compulsory. He could not be as explicit or as literal as Dickens, because most of his characters represented a very different class. The latter could draw in detail the house he selected as most appropriate for the occupation of Sairey Gamp, because the actual tenants were not likely to find him out, or, if they ever read his description, to quarrel with it. But many of the clients whom Thackeray had to provide with dwellings were great people, and

could only be placed in great neighbourhoods, where the houses are large, conspicuous, and easily distinguished. He either had to omit any descriptive detail, or to mask the actual place he had in mind by locating it in some street or square with a fanciful name. Any student of his works will have no difficulty, however, in finding Guant House, Gaunt Square, and Great Gaunt street, if he makes a personal search for them in Mayfair, though they are not indicated in any map or directory.

Mayfair (let me say for the benefit of my readers who are so unfortunate as not to know London) is one of the three most fashionable neighbourhoods of the great metropolis, and of the three it is the most aristocratic and most ancient. It is, as nearly as possible, a square, about half a mile wide and three-quarters of a mile long, bounded at one end by Oxford

street, with its shops and plebeian traffic, at the other end by the most delightful of London streets, Piccadilly ; at one side by Bond street, and at the other by Park Lane, the houses in which overlook the beautiful expanse of Hyde Park. The names of some of its streets have become synonymous with patrician pomp and the affluence of inheritance. It is the highest heaven of social aspiration, the most exalted object of worldly veneration. This is the house of the Duke of Hawksbury ; this of the Earl of Tue-brook ; that of Viscount Wallasey, and that of Lord Arthur Bebbington. It is preëminently the region of the "quality." But let not the reader suppose that it is a region of exterior splendor, of spacious architecture, of brilliant appearance.

Belgravia is far grander to look at, and seems to possess greater riches, and to use

them more lavishly. Even Tyburnia, the neighborhood to the north of Hyde Park, is more suggestive of social eminence. Mayfair displays none of the signs of the rude enjoyment and proud assertiveness which spring from recent prosperity. It is old-fashioned, un-changing, and dull. It is little different from what it was at the beginning of the century, except that it is nearer decay, and that febrile irruptions of modern Queen Anne architecture occasionally vary the sombreness of its original style. The physiognomy of its houses expresses a sort of torpor, as if familiarity with honours were as wearisome as continuous association with misfortune. They have an air of funereal resignation. Many of the streets are short and narrow : many of the houses are dingy. The ornaments are of a sepulchral kind, such as urns over the door-ways, and funeral wreaths about

the porticoes. The blazoned heraldry of the hatchments has been nearly extinguished by the smoke. At some doors there are two incongruous obelisks, joined to the iron railing which screens the basement, and the portico is extended to the curb. But ornaments even as unsatisfactory as these are not common, and most of the houses, with high fronts of blackened brick and oblong windows, are unadorned, except by a few boxes of flowers on the sills. The lackeys, with crimson knee-breeches, white stockings, laced coats, buckled shoes, and powdered hair, blaze in this gloom with a pyrotechnic splendour. Occasionally, the uniform rows of smoky brick and pointed stucco houses are overshadowed by a larger mansion, shut within its own walls, and some of the streets enter spacious squares, where there are sooty trees and grass and chirping sparrows.

It is possible that Thackeray had no exact place in mind when he wrote of Gaunt House and Gaunt Square, but it is not likely. The creatures of his imagination were flesh and blood to him, too vital to be left without habitations. "All the world knows," he says in *Vanity Fair*, "that Gaunt House stands in Gaunt Square, out of which Great Gaunt street leads. . . . Gaunt House occupies nearly a side of the square. The remaining three sides consist of mansions which have passed away into dowagerism. . . . It has a dreary look, nor is Lord Steyne's palace less dreary. All to be seen of it is a vast wall in front, with rustic columns at the great gate." Berkeley Square almost exactly corresponds with this description. Here are the gloomy mansions, looking out on grass and trees which seem to belong to a cemetery, and

here, immediately recognizable, is the palace, filling nearly a side of the square, and shut within high walls to hide what they inclose from the prying eyes of the passers, though the upper stories can be seen from the opposite side of the way. Here is the very gate, with heavy knockers, though the rustic columns of Thackeray's text have been replaced by new ones of a different shape. We do not find in the middle of the square the statue of Lord Gaunt, "in a three-tailed wig, and otherwise habited like a Roman emperor," but we can identify almost every other detail of the picture. Now, as this palace has long been occupied by a noble family, it would not be just for us to mention the name of the house, lest some undeserved reproach should thereby fall on the tenants; for, while Thackeray described the locality with such faithful elaboration

it is not to be inferred that he drew the character of Lord Steyne from an actual person living in the neighbourhood; nothing indeed, could be less probable.

He also speaks of the square as Shiverley Square, and briefly mentions it in describing Becky's drive to the house of Sir Pitt Crawley: "Having passed through Shiverley Square into Great Gaunt street, the carriage at length stopped at a tall, gloomy house, between two other tall, gloomy houses, each with a hatchment over the middle drawing-room window, as is the custom in Great Gaunt street, in which gloomy locality death seems to reign perpetual."

Great Gaunt street is undoubtedly Hill street, which he mentions specifically in another place as the home of Lady Gaunt's mother. Sometimes it was necessary for him to invent a name, and when he did so

he was peculiarly apt. Gaunt Square seems a more fitting and descriptive name than Berkeley Square, but he frequently varied the real with the fictitious name with playful caprice.

It was in another of these queer old streets in Mayfair that that wicked old fairy godmother, the Countess of Kew, lived, and there (in Queen street) Ethel Newcome visited her, and was instructed in the rigorous social code which unites fortune with fortune, or fortune with rank, and which is by no means limited to Mayfair or Belgravia, but finds expositors and adherents under the bluer skies of America. Ethel herself lived with her mother in Park Lane, the western boundary of Mayfair, and assuredly the most attractive part of the region. Park Lane has all of Hyde Park before its windows, —all the variegated and plentifully stocked flower-beds of the

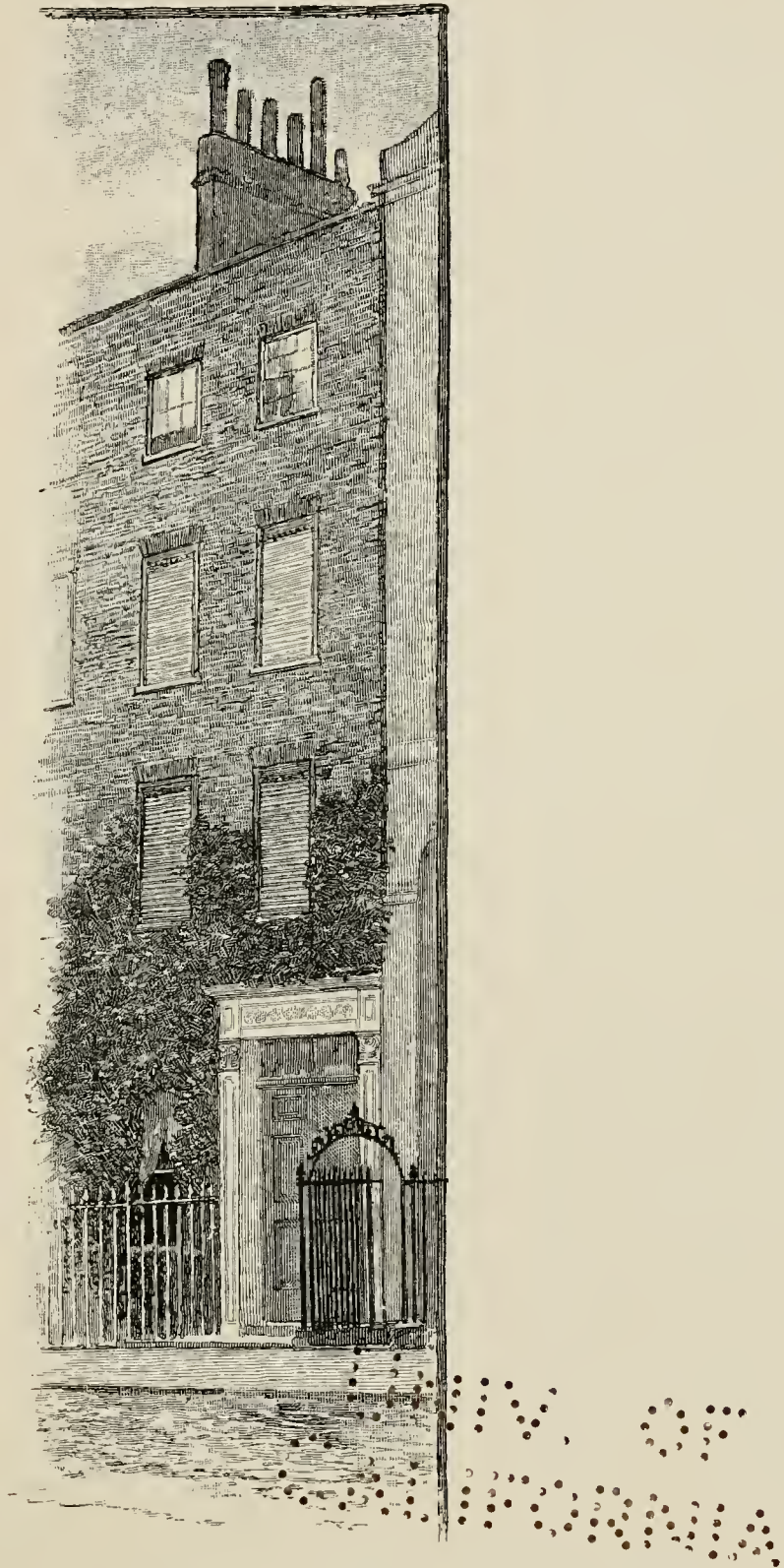
Ring Road, the wide sweep of grassy playground, and the knots of patriarchal trees which give the Park one of its greatest charms. Unlike most of the region behind it is cheerful; or, if not exactly cheerful, it has not the mopish signs of withdrawal from all natural human interests which are seen in many of the houses in Gaunt Square and the tributary streets. Some of the houses are small, with oriel windows, and little balconies filled with flower-pots; some of them are palatial in size and decoration; but all of them are fashionable, and elderly bachelors are known to give incredibly large prices for the smallest possible quarters under the roof of the meanest of them. The exteriors are not of the sooty brick which characterizes Hill street, but of plaster, which is annually repainted in drab or cream colour at the beginning of each season. What with the flowers of

the Park and the gardens which lie before some of the houses, Park Lane seems a fitting abode for those who are fortunate both in birth and in wealth ; it is as patrician as any other part of Mayfair, and it relieves itself of the gloom which seems to be considered an inevitable accessory of respectability elsewhere.

In one of these houses—which one it is not easy to say, as Thackeray has given us no clue—Lady Ann Newcome lived, and at it Mrs. Hobson Newcome looked from afar with an envy which betrayed itself in her constant reiterations of her contentment with her own circumstances. Mrs. Hobson lived in Bryanston Square, a dingily verdant quadrangle north of Oxford street, near which Clive had a studio ; and J. J. Ridley, Fred Bayham, Miss Cann, and the Rev. Charles Honeyman, lodged together in Walpole street, Mayfair. The Rev.

Charles Honeyman's chapel was close by, and before the story of *Vanity Fair*, reached its end there was a charitable lady in the congregation who wrote hymns and called herself Lady Crawley, and from whom William Dobbin and Amelia Sedley, now united, shrunk as they passed her at the fancy fair, recognizing in that altered person the dreadful Becky.

In the eyes of the lover of Thackeray, no character of history or fiction has lent more interest to Mayfair than Becky, to which neighbourhood she came with her husband some two or three years after their return from Paris, establishing herself in "a very small, comfortable house in Curzon street," and demonstrating to the world the useful and interesting art of living on nothing a year. There is more than one small house in Curzon street, but among them all Becky's is unmistakable. It is



BECKY SHARP'S HOUSE, 22 CURZON STREET.

on the south side of the street, near the western end, and only a few doors farther east than the house in which Lord Beaconsfield died. It is four stories and a half high, and is built of blackish brick like its neighbours, with painted sills and portico. Its extreme narrowness, compared with its height, especially distinguishes it : the front door, with drab pilasters and a moulded architrave, is just half its width, and only leaves room for one parlour window on the first floor. One can see over the railings into the basement and through the kitchen windows. Phantoms appear to us in all the windows—the ghost of Becky herself, dressed in a pink dress, her shapely arms and shoulders wrapped in gauze ; her ringlets hanging about her neck ; her feet peeping out of the crisp folds of silk—“the prettiest little feet in the prettiest little sandals in the finest silk stockings

in the world." It was in this cozy little domicile that the arch little hypocrite entertained Lord Steyne, whose house in Gaunt Square is only a few hundred yards distant, and Rawdon fleeced young Southdown at cards. No one can help smiling at the remembrances that come upon him in looking at those basement windows. No one who has read *Vanity Fair* is likely to forget the picture of the sensual marquis gazing into the kitchen and seeing no one there just before he knocks at the door, where he is met by Becky, who is as fresh as a rose from her dressing-table, and who excuses her pretended dishabille by saying that she has just come out of the kitchen, where she has been making pie, to which palpable lie the marquis gives an audacious affirmation by adding that he saw her there as he came in!

This little house was chosen for that

scene in which Thackeray's genius rises to its highest point of dramatic intensity; and so many literary pilgrims come to peep at it that the tenants must be annoyed, though the policeman on the beat has become so accustomed to them that he no longer eyes them cornerwise or suspects them of burglarious intentions.





IX.

THE places with which Thackeray was personally associated are more interesting, perhaps, than the scenes of his novels. In 1834, he lived in Albion street, near Hyde Park Gardens, and it was there that he, a young man of twenty-three, began to contribute to *Fraser's Magazine*. In 1837, then newly married, he lived in Great Coram street, close by the Foundling Hospital. As I have stated, he had chambers at No. 10, Crown Office Row, in the Temple, and at No. 88, St. James's street, both of which buildings are now demolished. When he had become a successful author,

he lived in Brompton and Kensington, and at the latter place, to which he was greatly attached, he died. He was at No. 36, Onslow Square, Brompton, when he unsuccessfully offered himself as member of Parliament for Oxford, and two years later, when he began to discover the thorns in the editorial cushion of the *Cornhill Magazine*. Mr. James Hodder, his private secretary, has given us an interesting glimpse of him as he was while in Onslow Square :—

“Duty called me to his bed-chamber every morning, and as a general rule I found him up and ready to begin work, though he was sometimes in doubt and difficulty as to whether he should commence sitting, or standing, or walking, or lying down. Often he would light a cigar, and, after pacing the room for a few minutes, would put the unsmoked remnant on the mantel-piece and resume his work with increased cheerfulness, as if

he gathered fresh inspiration from the gentle odours of the sublime tobacco."

Little wonder that he liked Kensington. It is the pleasantest of the many pleasant London suburbs. Though it is not four miles from Charing Cross, to which it is knitted by continuous streets and houses, it is like a thriving country town, old-fashioned, but prosperous, with shops as brilliant and as well stocked as those of Regent street, and with many evidences of antiquity, but none of decay. There are lofty new buildings and old ones, behind the modernized fronts of which you can see leaded dormer windows, angular chimney-pots, and bowed-down roofs of red tiles. There are many weather-worn but splendid mansions shut within their own high walls, and some in less sequestered gardens. The place is famous for its fine old trees and open spaces of verdure. Holland House is

here, and the palace in which Queen Victoria was born, with the beautiful and deeply wooded gardens adjoining Hyde Park. The inhabitants of the old suburb have had many illustrious persons among them ; and Thackeray is one of those best and most affectionately remembered.

His tall, commanding figure was often seen in the old High street, moving along erect, with a firm, stately tread, though his dress was somewhat careless and loose-fitting ; his large, candid face was serious and almost severe as he walked on engaged in meditation, but, being awakened from his reverie by the voice of a friend, a glad smile quickly overspread it and illuminated it. He had many friends among his neighbors, and often sat down to dinner with them. He attended regularly the nine o'clock services in the old parish church on Sunday mornings.

From 1847 to 1853, Thackeray lived in the bay-windowed house known as the "Cottage," at No. 13 (now No. 16) Young street, and in it *Vanity Fair*, *Esmond*, and *Pendennis* were written. There are few houses in the great city which possess a more brilliant record than this. Most of his work was done in a second-story room, overlooking an open space of gardens and orchards; and the gentleman who at present occupies the house has placed an entablature under the window commemorating the genius that has consecrated it. Between the dates, 1847 and 1853, the initials W. M. T. are grouped in a monogram in the centre of the entablature, and in the border the names of *Vanity Fair*, *Esmond*, and *Pendennis*, are inscribed. Just across the street Miss Thackeray (Mrs. Ritchie) now lives, in full view of her old home, and in her charming novel *Old*

Kensington, she affectionately calls Young street "dear old street!" There is no doubt that the happiest years of Thackeray's life were spent in the old, bow-windowed cottage.*

I have talked with many persons who knew him intimately, and under various circumstances. All speak of him in one way,—of his gentleness, his kindness, his sincerity, and his generosity. "That man had the heart of a woman!" fervidly said one who was his next-door neighbour for several years. This gentleman, Dr. J. J.

* "I once made a pilgrimage with Thackeray (at my request, of course, the visits were planned) to the various houses where his books had been written; and I remember, when we came to Young street, Kensington, he said, with mock gravity, 'Down on your knees, you rogue, for here *Vanity Fair* was penned! And I will go down with you, for I have a high opinion of that little production myself.'"—*Yesterdays with Authors*. J. T. FIELDS.

Merriman, whose family have lived in Kensington Square since 1794, possesses a number of valuable souvenirs of the great author, including some unpublished letters, in one of which Thackeray regrets that he has not seen the doctor for some time, and characteristically adds: "I wish *Vanity Fair* were not so big or we performers in it so busy; then we might see each other and shake hands once in a year or so." On one occasion the doctor begged him to write his name in a copy of *Vanity Fair* which Thackeray had given him, and the latter not only did this, but made an exquisite little drawing on the title-page, than which the book could not have a more suggestive or appropriate frontispiece. A little boy and girl are seated on the ground, one blowing bubbles and the other hugging a doll, while behind them looms up the portentous mile-stone of life.

The "dear old street," as Miss Thackeray calls it, ends in Kensington Square, which is full of old houses, to each of which some historic interest belongs. The square was built in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and in one of the old houses Lady Castlewood, Beatrice, and Colonel Esmond lived, and there sheltered the reckless and unscrupulous Pretender.*

In 1853, Thackeray left Kensington and went to live in Onslow Square, Brompton; but he came back to the old court suburb in 1861, and occupied the fine new house which he had built for himself in the Palace Gardens. It is the second house on the west side of the street, a substantial mansion of red brick, adjoining a much more

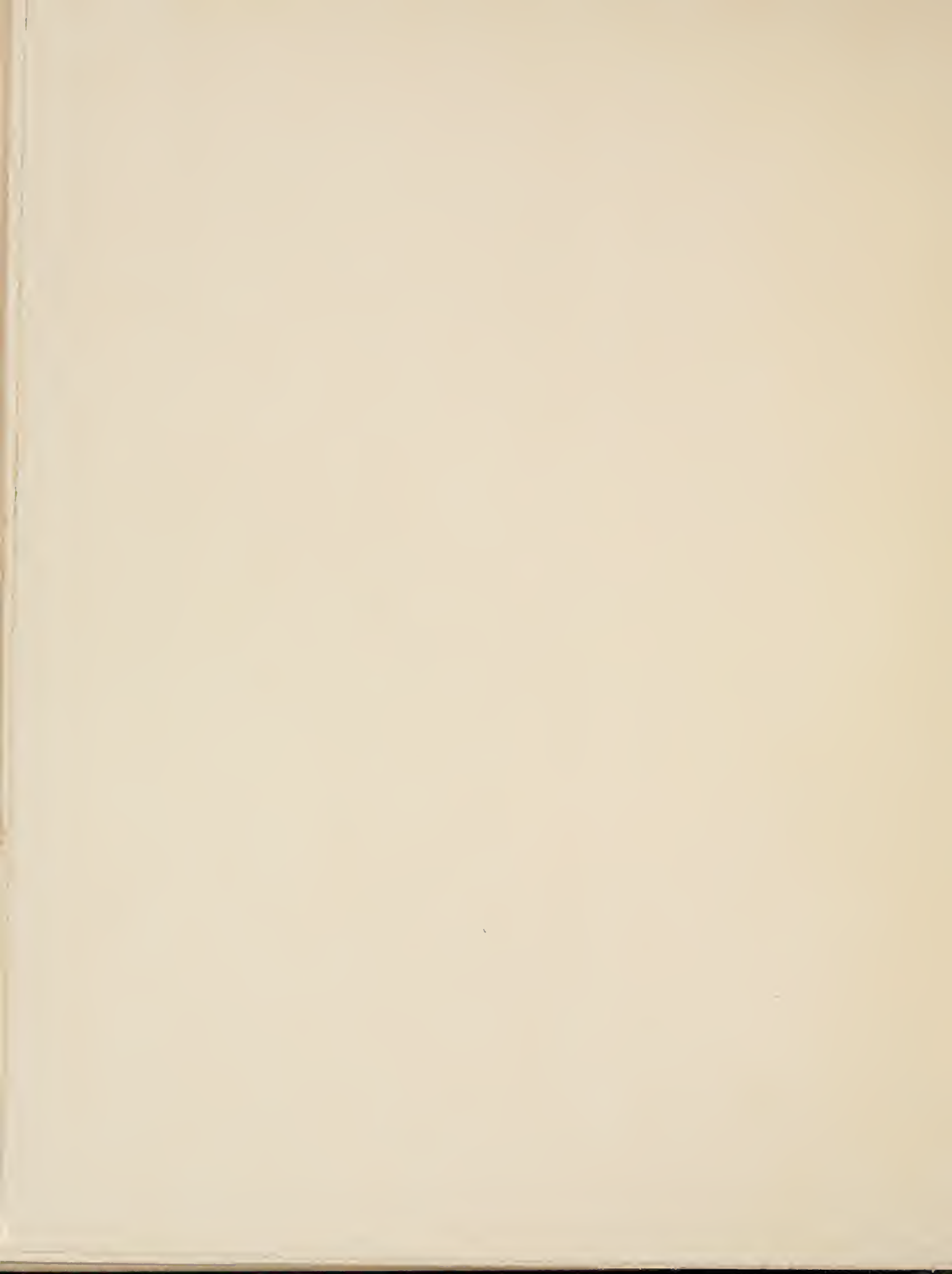
* Kensington Square has had many celebrated inhabitants, including Talleyrand, Joseph Addison, the Duchess of Mazarin, and Archbishop Herring.

picturesque and older house covered with ivy; and it was here that he died suddenly on December 24, 1863, in the room at the south-east corner of the second story. The last time that I saw it, an auctioneer's flag was hung out, and the broker's men were playing billiards in the lofty northern extension which Thackeray built for a library, and in which he wrote *Denis Duval*.

Thackeray was buried in Kensal Green cemetery in the north-west of London, and was followed to the grave by Dickens, Browning, Millais, Trollope, and many who knew the goodness of the soul that had been called away. Kensal Green is as unattractive as a burial ground could be. It is like a prison-yard, with few trees, and inclosed by high brick walls. But its numerous tenantry include many who have worked faithfully and well in literature and

art ; and surrounded by the memorials of these is one of the simplest tombstones in the place, inscribed with two dates and the name of William Makepeace Thackeray.











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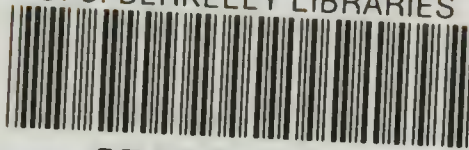
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